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ABSTRACT

This bulletin summarizes the principles of discipline and classroom management that appear to be successful. It also looks at how educators in Oregon and elsewhere are applying these principles in their schools. Despite differences of philosophy, certain principles are shared in some form by all schools of thought. The first chapter discusses preparation, clear expectations for behavior, consistent consequences, effective instruction, reinforcement, and positive relationships and respect. The second chapter first considers why no one system of classroom management is likely to meet the needs of today's teachers. Then attention shifts to several "eclectic approaches" to discipline that take into account a range of student behaviors and corresponding teacher responses. The chapter concludes with a description of one school's discipline program. In the third chapter, several impediments to classroom management are discussed: lack of time, inattention to planning, absence of administrative support, and the tendency of some teachers to base their actions on conventional wisdom rather than rational evidence. This chapter also considers the challenge facing educators who are committed to creating a productive learning environment. Appended are 40 references and five interviews. (SI)

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THE CHALLENGE OF CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

Talbot Bielefeldt

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Talbot Bielefeldt

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Contents

	Preface	iii
	Introduction: Good News, Bad News	1
1.	**Principles of Effective Discipline**	3
	Preparation	3
	Clear Expectations for Behavior	4
	Consistent Consequences	4
	Instruction	6
	Reinforcement	7
	Relationships and Respect	8
2.	**Developing a Discipline System**	10
	The Challenge of Diversity	10
	Eclectic Approaches	11
	One Successful Discipline Program	13
3.	**No Excuses**	15
	Impediments to Classroom Management	15
	A Commitment to Competence	16
	Conclusion	19
	Bibliography	21
	Interviews	25

Preface

Several of the researchers and practitioners quoted in this OSSC Bulletin acknowledge a discrepancy between what is known about classroom discipline and what is actually practiced in many schools and classrooms. Although research carried out in recent years has identified principles of effective classroom management, those principles are not necessarily being applied.

Even though some of the reasons for the gap between research and practice are beyond educators' control, Talbot Bielefeldt encourages teachers and administrators not to make excuses, but to accept the challenge of implementing strategies that are known to work. It is hoped that this Bulletin will help them to meet that challenge and thereby to create and maintain a productive learning environment in their schools and classrooms.

Bielefeldt is a freelance research analyst and writer and also serves as associate editor for the International Council for Computers in Education, headquartered at the University of Oregon.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

Introduction: Good News, Bad News

Discussions of classroom discipline often have the character of good news/bad news anecdotes. The good news is that for the past three years, discipline has not been foremost in national polls of public concerns about schools. The bad news is that drug use has taken its place. And in the last poll conducted by Phi Delta Kappa and the Gallup organization, "lack of discipline" was still the second most frequently mentioned problem (Alec M. Gallup and Stanley M. Elam 1988).

The good news is that the most common classroom discipline problems are still nonviolent petty disruptions. Thomas Weber and Charles Sloan (1986) compared teacher surveys of discipline problems done in Georgia in 1961 and 1974 with a similar survey from Illinois in 1984. Smoking, profanity, discourtesy, and failure to do homework were the most frequently listed offenses. The National Education Association (1985) points out that discipline's infamous high rating in the Gallup poll is based on the approximately 25 percent of respondents (19 percent in 1988) who consistently list discipline as a serious problem. This indicates that three quarters of the population do not think discipline is a major concern.

On the other hand, it is bad news that truly grave problems, such as violent crime and alcoholism, show up on surveys at all. And while the offenses themselves may not be acted out in the classroom, their physical and emotional effects are certainly felt there.

There has been a wave of research and writing on discipline and classroom management. In the 1986 edition of the decennial *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, Walter Doyle notes the prodigious growth of classroom management as a research specialty. That's the good news. The bad news is that much of what has been learned is not being effectively applied.

"The gap between knowledge and practice is wider in education and social services than in any other field," says Stan Paine, lead author of *Structuring Your Classroom for Academic Success*, and a principal in Pleasant Hill, Oregon. "Something reported in the *New England Journal of*

Medicine is probably going to be standard practice in two years. In education and social services, the time lag is more like 20 years."

Numerous reasons are advanced for the disparity between research and practice. They include lack of time and money for teacher training; the cumbersomeness of certain behavioral techniques; the increased diversity of the school population; socioeconomic conditions; the attractiveness of short-term solutions (such as punishment) that have deleterious long-term effects; and the fact that some teachers simply don't get along well enough with students to make a discipline program work.

There is the additional problem of what has been called the"sensory overload" of trying to digest the literature on discipline. An ERIC computer search of the *Resources in Education* and *Current Index to Journals in Education* indexes produces a list of titles and summaries that alone comprise an inch-thick volume. This *OSSC Bulletin* summarizes those principles of discipline and classroom management that appear to be most successful, and it also looks at how educators in Oregon and elsewhere are applying these principles in their schools.

A number of people deserve credit for this report. Jerry Silbert and Mary Gleason provided valuable feedback during my initial attempts to organize the large amount of literature that turned up. Vern Jones, Stan Paine, Randy Sprick, Ernie Carbajal, and Geoff Colvin took time out of busy professional schedules to discuss their work on classroom discipline and management. Special thanks are due my wife, Nancy Woolfson, veteran teacher in the Eugene School District, who did her best to keep this paper grounded in the realities of everyday classroom life.

Chapter 1

Principles of Effective Discipline

The essential nature of classroom discipline problems tends to vary with the person describing them. Discipline and classroom management are sometimes described as matters of power, of behavior contingencies, or of understanding between teachers and children. Despite differences of philosophy, certain principles are shared in some form by all schools of thought. They include preparation, clear expectations for behavior, consistent consequences, effective instruction, reinforcement, and positive relationships and respect.

Preparation

Preparation refers to detailed, comprehensive planning, not just a vague goal to "be prepared." Walter Doyle (1986) writes, "The key to a teacher's success in management appears to be his or her (a) understanding of the likely configuration of events in a classroom, and (b) skill in monitoring and guiding activities in light of this information."

Randall Sprick (1985), author of *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom*, suggests that teachers list all types of activities in their classrooms and imagine how they want students to behave in each case. This kind of analysis allows teachers to establish expectations for their students that are appropriate and reasonable.

Preparation is a function of instruction as well as managerial approach. Ever since Jacob Kounin analyzed videotapes of classrooms in action in the late 1960s, research has indicated that the smooth flow of activities is more important to overall discipline than particular techniques for halting disruptive behavior. Teacher trainee John Shearer (1988) recounts a deteriorating discipline situation brought on partly by incomplete lesson plans. "The students . . . were amazingly perceptive when I was unprepared. At the first

sign of dead time, they would become distracted and begin distracting others."

Clear Expectations

Expectations for pupils' behavior, both in the classroom and the school, must be published and explained. Edmund T. Emmer, Carolyn M. Evertson, and Linda M. Anderson (1980), who observed elementary classrooms at the beginning of the school year, found that in better-managed rooms, "As soon as most students had arrived the teachers began describing rules and procedures. . . . The rules and procedures were explained clearly, with examples and reasons. Not all procedures were discussed, only those that were needed for initial activities."

Lee Canter, whose "Assertive Discipline" program particularly emphasizes expectations and consequences, suggests teachers limit the number of basic classroom rules to five. These should be expressed in terms of concrete behaviors, such as "follow directions," "don't leave the room without permission," "complete all assignments."

"Don't assume kids understand rules," says Ernie Carbajal, principal at Eugene's Meadowlark Elementary. "It's very important to teach the routine. If your plan calls for a particular demeanor in the hall, it's up to the teacher to demonstrate that demeanor, to walk through the routine, practicing the correct procedure."

Merl Helms and Joyce Yoder (1985) report that at Memorial Middle School in Albany, Oregon, "students were made aware that the principal theme of (the) new discipline program was their right to make decisions and their responsibility to accept the results of their choices. . . . Activities such as cross-word puzzles, worksheets, and tests were given to actively educate the students about the new program." When surveyed at a midyear review, 93 percent of the students knew the rules and consequences at Memorial.

Timing appears to be important. Although rules are added during the school year, the main expectations of students need to be presented at the beginning of the year. In a followup to earlier research, Edmund Emmer and his colleagues (1983) trained teachers in the methods that had been characteristic in well-managed classrooms. Teachers who implemented changes in midyear were not as successful as those who were trained and began the program in September. This has implications not only for teachers, but for the administrators who must allot time and resources to inservice training.

Consistent Consequences

Whatever rules and consequences are set need to be carried out consistently. In the study by Emmer and others, effective and ineffective managers

basically set the same kinds of rules. "The major distinguishing characteristic of the more effective managers was that they monitored students carefully and when disruptive behavior occurred, they stopped it promptly."

Consistency is difficult to maintain if it ends at the classroom door. In an early work by Wes Becker, Siegfried Engelmann, and Don Thomas (1975), the authors note the problems of maintaining a special behavior modification system across classrooms: "If the children are to be returned to another class . . . train the receiving teacher in good reinforcement procedures. Without such training, your efforts may be wasted."

Classroom discipline depends on schoolwide programs to guarantee followup. General discipline or student management plans are typically used to standardize rules and procedures. Vern Jones (1984) of Lewis and Clark College in Portland writes, "Consistency in staff expectations and responding to student behavior is an important factor in minimizing student misbehavior."

Jones lists a number of characteristics of a successful school discipline plan, including congruency with school goals and students' developmental level; a database on management problems; full-staff cooperation; emphasis on (training in) establishing positive relationships; clear and consistent expectations and consequences; focus on positive school climate; systematic involvement of parents; and periodic evaluation.

Besides "laying down the law," schoolwide plans are also used to provide support for teachers from outside the classroom. At Pleasant Hill Elementary School, for instance, ad hoc "Care Teams" form to devise intervention plans for at-risk students with behavioral problems. A Care Team, which may be created at the suggestion of any certified or scheduled staff, consists of the principal, counselor, and all teachers involved with the student.

Such cooperative efforts have been advocated as a means of helping problem students without referring them to special education programs. The resulting interventions are staff creations, rather than being unique to a particular room or teacher. In a situation like that suggested by Becker, Engelmann, and Thomas, the teacher with a troublesome student should not also have to worry about training the colleague across the hall.

One of the thorniest issues in following through with classroom behavior management is coordinating school discipline procedures with the home environment. A survey by Joseph D. Huber (1984) found that the main concerns of teachers, principals, and administrators were in some cases very different. Principal J.J. Garza (1987) of Jefferson Elementary in Jefferson, Oregon, writes, "I have dealt with a variety of discipline problems. The most difficult ones resulted due to a lack of parent involvement and cooperation." Meadowlark Principal Ernie Carbajal says, "What we're finding more and more is students display a lack of desire to cooperate. There is a lack of reinforcement in the home for the same value system we have in school."

Jefferson Elementary developed an inschool behavior contract that

brings the parents into the program by requiring daily signatures by parents as well as teachers. Meadowlark's program was more comprehensive. Principal Carbajal attributes the change in student attitudes to general circumstances in society—broken families, two-income parents—that reduce the opportunity for values instruction at home. To help counter these effects, Meadowlark is incorporating cooperative learning strategies and a "Caring Skills" curriculum that is intended to teach communication, conflict resolution, and helping skills among students.

Effective Instruction

"At its foundation," Walter Doyle writes, "the teacher's management task is primarily one of establishing and maintaining work systems for classroom groups rather than spotting and punishing misbehavior, remediating behavioral disorders, or maximizing the engagement of individual students."

At the very least, interesting lessons promote classroom discipline by holding students' attention and filling up the hour. The achievement that results from effective instruction may also improve students' attitudes about themselves, the school, and the teacher. These positive attitudes in turn may reduce the need for certain disruptive behaviors.

Some educators see discipline as merely one aspect of instruction. Geoff Colvin is principal of Lane School, a Lane County Educational Service District facility for emotionally disturbed adolescents referred out of regular classrooms. He says, "Behavior management as a field is very much reactionary—always doing things after the fact. There is a move to be more proactive, to treat it more as an instructional problem."

Colvin calls his approach a "reteaching" model. That is, inappropriate behaviors are dealt with more or less in the same way as incorrect answers to a math problem or history essay. In the first place, teachers are responsible for teaching the correct behaviors. If a student does misbehave, the assumption is that he or she has learned the wrong response, and the teacher's job is not simply to eliminate the inappropriate behavior, but to teach an alternative.

Colvin relates a personal anecdote about a violent student who demanded his attention. After the student refused to return to class, Colvin told him he had three minutes to comply, or the staff would call the police. The student returned to class. In a subsequent conference about the incident, the student revealed that the same thing had happened in a previous school, except that he had not been given the choice of doing the right thing (returning to class). The police simply took him away.

By letting the student know the correct response and giving him a choice whether or not to comply, "he has some ownership of the problem," Colvin says. "It's not a situation where the adults go whisper in a room and decide what's going to happen."

Once discipline is seen as an instructional issue, certain developments in teaching technique appear particularly appropriate to discipline problems. One of these is the effectiveness of working with entire groups rather than individuals. Robert Crocker (1986) reported that while teachers he interviewed expressed concern for helping slower students with individual attention, they in fact lavished more time on able students. "Furthermore," Crocker writes, "if one looks at off-task behavior, this is again more likely to occur if the teacher is paying sustained attention to one student while the others are supposed to be engaged in seatwork."

Another relevant instructional principle is high success rate. Jere Brophy writes, "Where the teacher is present to monitor responses and provide immediate feedback . . . success rates of at least 70-80 percent should be expected. Where students are expected to work on their own, however, success rates of 95-100 percent will be necessary." Less-effectively managed classrooms in Emmer and colleagues' (1980) studies were characterized by rules (such as, "be in the right place at the right time") that were too vague for anyone to follow with consistent success.

Reinforcement

All systems of classroom management involve some kind of positive interaction when students are fulfilling expectations, and some type of negative interaction when they do not. Although systematic use of reward and punishment has impressive research results in terms of changing behavior, reinforcement has traditionally been the most controversial aspect of discipline programs.

For one thing, finding and administering reinforcers is a complex skill. The most common reinforcer—verbal praise—has been shown to quickly lose its power if overused. Other reinforcers, such as tokens and treats, can be so time-consuming to administer that they are not practical in a regular classroom.

A major point of contention is the role of negative reinforcers. Punishment is recognized—even by its advocates—as having potentially calamitous side effects. In some cases, reprimands and criticism provide needed attention—a paradoxical reward. Stan Paine points out in *Structuring Your Classroom for Academic Success* that students tend to avoid the punishing situation, which in this case is the classroom where their full participation is desired. Severe punishments can evoke resentment by students and can involve modeling aggressive behavior by teachers. In any case, the range of options is limited, and the most frequent offenders may also be the most hardened to punishment. Principal Geoff Colvin notes that the most severe penalty this society can mete out—capital punishment—has not been shown to be an effective deterrent to capital crimes.

On the other hand, there is precious little to reinforce positively in

some students' behavior. Some educators say punishment or physical intervention is needed to bring continuously inappropriate behavior under control before more positive interventions can be used. Randall Sprick (1985) writes, "Punishment techniques are a necessary part of an effective discipline policy. To use punishment procedures effectively, however, it is important to understand that they are only a small part of a broad plan to improve student behavior." According to Sprick, teachers should establish punishments for as few behaviors as possible. Those behaviors should be defined precisely and made clear to students. When punishment is administered, it should be done so consistently and fairly, without humiliation, and backed up with positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.

Wilford A. Weber (1981), in a study of teachers' perceptions of effective classroom management strategies, found that positive reinforcement was believed to be effective by almost 95 percent of the teachers in his sample. Other favored strategies were time out/extinction (removing reinforcement for inappropriate behavior) and logical consequences (results implicit in a behavior, such as cleaning up after making a mess). Punishment was considered effective by only 11 percent of the teachers. It is also notable that half of the most popular techniques (those chosen by more than 60 percent of respondents) had to do with the classroom environment, rather than with responses to behavior. They included establishing and maintaining group cohesiveness and productive group norms, exhibiting unconditional positive regard, and employing problem-solving classroom meetings.

Positive Relationships and Respect

"There must be matter-of-fact consequences for inappropriate behavior," Randall Sprick writes. "Punishments that severely embarrass students may be effective at eliminating misbehavior, but they will also destroy any possibility of a positive relationship between teacher and student. A student who has been humiliated by a teacher is unlikely ever to do well for that teacher again."

Excessive control appears to be as bad for the teacher as for the student. Frederick Lunenberg (1984) reports that coercive, authoritarian approaches to rule-setting and discipline tend to result not only in increased student alienation, but in reduced self-concept of both students and teachers. Karen Harris (1985) found that authoritarian control was also related to increased teacher stress levels.

Besides humanistic concerns, respect for students' rights has a legal aspect. In a summary of court decisions, Julius Menacker (1981) points out that from a judicial standpoint, disciplinary consequences (both for students and staff) are necessary to meet educational goals and must be free from "arbitrariness, capriciousness and unnecessary vagueness," as well as from "conditions that discriminate against minority groups or other clearly identi-

liable classes of students or teachers."

Respect for students is not just a matter of avoiding infringement on rights, but of bringing students into a cooperative effort to maintain order and purposeful work in the classroom. Implicit in the educational approach to discipline, for instance, is the assumption that students are fully capable of self-control, if only given the necessary skills. In fact, students can be actively included in the formulation and administration of management systems.

At Eastwood School in Roseburg, Oregon, students are asked to try at least two of nine conflict resolution strategies ("compromise," "apologize," "ignore," "share and take turns," and so forth) prior to referring disagreements to adult staff.

After introducing a self-monitored classroom management system, Nels Sorensen and William Roueche (1986) reported reduced discipline problems and increased time on task. Their natural science students recorded their own compliance with a list of ten required classroom behaviors. Points earned by good behavior could be spent for library passes, inclass free time, or even raised grades.

Of all the principles mentioned here, relationships may be the area that should receive the greatest research in the near future, as Vernon Jones (1988) says:

> An awful lot of what we know about classroom management has been published. I don't think anything substantial has happened since Doyle's article (in *Handbook of Research in Teaching*). In the future, things will be going more towards analyzing the environment, how kids feel about other kids and teachers.

Chapter 2

Developing a Discipline System

Given the widespread acceptance of the principles outlined above, it is surprising that there is not more agreement on what kind of discipline program to institute in classrooms.

Part of the controversy may be specific to packaged training programs. Daniel Duke and Vernon Jones (1984) point out that in a time when school districts have fewer resources to spend on training, authors with particular systems to sell have extra motivation to distinguish their materials from the competition.

Some of the conflicts between discipline programs have more substantive origins. For instance, cooperative learning methods have been mentioned here as a means to improve students' interpersonal skills, and thus certain kinds of behavior problems. Yet breaking classrooms into small units goes against research that indicates whole-group instruction is the best way to maintain time-on-task and classroom order.

This chapter first considers why no one system of classroom management is likely to meet the needs of today's teachers, who serve an increasingly diverse student population. Then attention shifts to several "eclectic approaches" to discipline that take into account a range of student behaviors and corresponding teacher responses. The chapter concludes with a description of one schools' discipline program.

The Challenge of Diversity

The most intractable conflict is not between different discipline programs, but between the need for consistency and the fact of diversity. American public schools contain an increasingly heterogeneous population. This new melting pot is a result of mobility, immigration, desegregation, and mainstreaming of students with special needs. Even the general principles of

discipline are hard to apply to such a diverse population. Planning is critical—but planning for whom? In a school with a transient population base, the abilities and backgrounds of entering students are uncertain. Ideas about what constitutes reasonable expectations may differ from class to class, from year to year. Meaningful consequences—and meaningful reinforcement—may be different for each student. Follow-through becomes more difficult when families move or separate. Many of these operations depend on clear communication in a mutually understood language. In many areas of the country, even that is too much to take for granted.

Critics of "packaged system" programs complain that no one system can take this variability into account. "There are a number of factors to consider when choosing an appropriate intervention," write Richard Curwin and Allen Mendler (1988), "yet, when left with only an either-or choice, teachers often have no alternative but to look the other way. . . . Under these conditions, teachers either redesign the program or resent using it."

Randall Sprick (1988) says that teachers who are fully committed to a system may be tempted to "write off" students who do not fit the mold, rather than employing a different (but philosophically incompatible) strategy that might avoid suspension or expulsion. According to Duke and Jones, the correct belief by teachers that no one system of classroom management is going to be sufficiently sensitive to the needs of their diverse students can also have the unfortunate consequence of discouraging training in *any* system.

In *Solving Discipline Problems* Charles Wolfgang and Carl Glickman (1986) argue, "If the teacher has been trained in a specific approach, or in no approach, the same problem will still exist. The teacher has a limited range of techniques for dealing with the limitless range of behaviors in children."

Eclectic Approaches

Several models exist for coordinating various systems of discipline and management. All models involve the idea of a continuum of behavior, such that a teacher can identify the current discipline situation on the continuum and then gain an idea of what could and should happen next.

Vernon and Louise Jones' (1981) *Responsible Classroom Discipline*, Randall Sprick's (1985) *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom*, and the "Cascade Model" of Gregory Stefanich and Louise Bell (1985) all emphasize the importance of timing. Preventive measures—planning, communicating expectations, and establishing positive relationships—come first. Only when these steps fail do more reactive measures such as differential reinforcement come into play. These models might all be described as problem-oriented, in that they focus on classroom situations that might arise in the classroom, and they offer whatever solutions seem appropriate from a number of different discipline systems.

Other scales exist within the particular context of reacting to misbehavior. These might be described as "scales of power." In this type of model, responses to behavior are organized from least assertive to most coercive. The most comprehensive such scale is Wolfgang and Glickman's Teacher Behavior Continuum. The steps on the scale are, in order of increasing use of power by the teacher:

Silently looking on (This can mean making students aware of attention, or it could mean simply assessment of a situation.)

Nondirective statements ("I saw that.")

Questions ("Why did you do that?")

Directive statements ("Don't do that.")

Modeling (Not, in this sense, passive exhibiting of good behavior, but such active interventions as pointing out a well-behaved student, or working the next problem on the desk of a disruptive student.)

Reinforcement (This includes rewards, withholding of rewards, and punishment.)

Physical intervention and isolation (The popular techniques of time out and inschool suspension fall here, as well as direct physical handling of students.)

Remembering the advantages of nonauthoritarian management, and keeping in mind that intervention can itself be a classroom disruption, teachers are advised to start by exercising the lowest level of power that might be expected to achieve results. If a disruptive student does not respond to a critical glance, the teacher speaks up, asks for an explanation, gives a command, and so forth, escalating the level of power involved. Research by Robert Shrigley (1985) with a similar 10-step scale of nonverbal and verbal interventions found that an average of 2.3 steps were required to cope with classroom disruptions.

Such a system functions as a matrix for organizing other discipline approaches. A teacher working within a particular program can see what response would be a logical next step. Alternatively, a teacher drawing on a variety of programs can more easily identify appropriate sources of new ideas. "Relationship-Listening" approaches, such as Thomas Gordon's (1974) Teacher Effectiveness Training, emphasize understanding students' feelings and needs and tend to provide techniques under the headings at the lower end of the TBC. "Confronting-Contracting" models emphasizing the social environment of the classroom (Rudolf Dreikurs [1968], William Glasser [1969]) offer most responses in the middle part of the scale. "Rules, Rewards and Punishment" systems (Assertive Discipline, behavior modification), which rely on expectations and positive or negative reinforcement, provide responses at the top of the continuum.

An Example:
One Successful Discipline Program

The exact architecture of discipline programs varies from school to school, depending on the population served and the educational philosophies of educators. However, a look at one program in some detail may illustrate how different principles of effective discipline work as a whole. The selection of one particular school is necessarily somewhat arbitrary. The program at Pleasant Hill Elementary is featured here because it was accessible, recommended by other educators, and integrates a variety of management strategies into a comprehensive system.

"We have *a* comprehensive system," says Pleasant Hill Principal Stan Paine. "We'll have a different one later this year, and next year. Best practice is evolving. Quality isn't a point you reach, but a commitment to getting better and better."

Pleasant Hill serves a student population of about 300 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders from a rural/suburban setting east of Eugene. The school's philosophy statement includes a belief in a strong academic orientation, advocating "activities which actively involve students in the learning process and outcomes with high relevance to life outside of school." In addition, the school defines its mission as nurturing students' self-concept by developing "a culture within the school in which each person is viewed as important. In building this culture, we acknowledge the necessity of actively teaching and encouraging positive interaction among everyone in the school."

At the classroom level, the Student Management Program calls for a combination of "traditional classroom management procedures" (rules, feedback, incentives, privileges) with "problem-solving circles/class meetings," in which students raise and solve conflicts in a cooperative group setting. Similar mixes of management and relationship techniques are seen at the individual, grade, and schoolwide levels.

The proportions are interesting: there are more procedures for rewards and rapport-building at Pleasant Hill than there are for intervening to stop deviant behavior. Besides the class circles mentioned above, examples of specified incentives and cooperative activities include monthly incentive/awards assemblies to recognize constructive behavior; grade-level student representative meetings; student/faculty lunches; and adult-child problem-solving meetings.

"We've put time into prevention, and its paid off," says Stan Paine. "We have fewer than one discipline referral per week."

Ten behaviors will result in a discipline referral: disrespect, disobedience, fighting, swearing, stealing, lying, cheating, forgery, vandalism, and skipping class. These are known to the entire school, as are the consequences. For first referrals, parents are contacted and students lose recess. Additional misbehavior can result in counselor referrals and inschool suspension. Referred students who have no additional discipline problems for nine

weeks get to "start fresh." As mentioned earlier, Pleasant Hill uses a type of teacher assistance team ("Care Team") to try to identify and solve problems before students enter the referral system at all.

Paine says his system works because

> we have a caring staff. There's a lot of interaction—teachers taking time to eat with kids, to greet them at the door. Part of the key is having a full-time counselor to help deal with more societal problems, such as children of alcoholics, and drug abuse. Not all school districts are so fortunate.

Chapter 3

No Excuses

Good news, bad news: Some schools have successful discipline programs; other schools are "not so fortunate." Why not? Lack of time, inattention to planning, absence of administrative support, and a tendency of some teachers to base their actions on conventional wisdom rather than rational evidence are some of the reasons effective discipline eludes some schools. After briefly reviewing these impediments to classroom management, this chapter considers the challenge facing educators who are committed to creating a productive learning environment.

Impediments to Classroom Management

Some problems may be logistical. It takes time to train teachers in comprehensive classroom management. Vernon Jones (1984) estimates thirty hours is a minimum for adequate inservice preparation. Some methods take time to implement. Johnny Purvis and Rex Leonard (1985) found that the top five strategies for preventing or handling student behavior problems in secondary schools were (1) student discipline records, (2) administrators phoning parents, (3) administrator-student conferences, (4) administrator-parent conferences, and (5) student-teacher conferences. "One wonders," they wrote, "how an educator would ever have the time to teach and/or administrate if all of the listed reactionary strategies for managing discipline were employed on a continuing basis."

More subtle impediments to adopting effective teaching strategies apparently lie in the social and institutional fabric of the school. Christopher Clark and Robert Yinger (1980) found that one of the crucial elements in successful management—teacher planning—is largely invisible to everyone but the classroom teacher. "Planning is the lifeblood of enthusiastic and well organized teaching, and most of it seems to be coming out of the hides of teachers. . . . It should receive a higher priority for support than it typically does."

Administrative support may not always be as helpful as intended. Linda McNeil (1988) reports on schools in which well-intentioned standardization procedures imposed from the top down resulted in loss of investment by master teachers in their own classes. "A distinct parallel existed between administrators' attempts to gain minimal compliance from teachers and teachers' willingness to settle for minimal participation from students."

Richard Kindsvatter and Mary McLoughlin (1985) suggest that a certain "mystique" surrounding discipline leads teachers to quickly revert to popular myth when any form of systematic classroom management runs into trouble. Specifically, teachers tend to see misbehavior as "self-evidently the fault of the student" and to depict the classroom as the scene of a constant power struggle between teacher and pupils. The authors list four reasons for this failure to adopt more rational attitudes.

First, society has not really insisted on a high quality of education, at least not to the extent of providing resources to ensure that current research reaches the classroom. Second, teachers typically function in accord with short-range goals. (In the short term, for instance, punishment often works—whatever its unpleasant long-term effects). Third, many teachers view their job as delivering subject matter to the students, not as dealing with the immediate needs of adolescents, which often have little to do with class content. Finally, some persons' motivations in pursuing teaching make them particularly susceptible to the discipline mystique. Those whose primary concern is job security are reluctant to take on the additional burden of new learning. Those who enjoy the power conferred on the position are not merely acquiescent, but "wedded to the suspect tenets of the conventional wisdom."

And of course there are those discipline problems that depend on situations beyond the control of the school. Thomas McDaniel (1986) notes that "youngsters today live with more freedom and independence than ever before" and are thus less inclined to accept authority from teachers. And there are the broken homes. And the drugs. That's the bad news.

A Commitment to Competence

The good news is that no source referenced in this Bulletin offers any excuses. "Clearly teachers deal with kids affected by some very powerful variables that we don't control," says Stan Paine. "So we have to identify variables over which we *do* have control. Time is always scarce. Some things—awards, class meetings—we schedule because they are priorities. We try to make sure how we use time is consistent with our goals."

Although admitting it is difficult to be consistent in a heterogeneous society, Wolfgang and Glickman call on educators to accept "the fact that working with diverse children who have different needs and styles is desirable and that teachers need to be educated in ways of making their own

behaviors more compatible with such diversity."

Kindsvatter and McLoughlin write,

> Discipline as mystique will be diminished and its place taken by rational beliefs only when teachers realize that it is not inscrutable or mysterious, but in fact involves the competent application of generally known and accepted educational principles.

Conclusion

The options open to the schools for maintaining order and a productive learning environment often appear very limited. Nevertheless, they exist. No matter how impoverished, disorganized, understaffed, or overcrowded a school is, applying the basic principles of classroom management and discipline will help. Not applying them will make matters worse. The challenge to educators would seem to be twofold. First, to implement the teaching strategies that are known to work; and second, to make the case to the public that by having the resources to implement these strategies well, schools could become a powerful agent of beneficial change.

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